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## PREHISTORIC ILLINOIS.

ITS PSYCHOZOIC PROBLEMS.

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Dr. J. F. Snyder.

In one of his reminiscences of Indian warfare in the west, that appeared in a recent popular magazine,<sup>1</sup> General Nelson A. Miles thus speculates concerning the American Indians; "whence they came, and when, we know not; but if we were to judge from their stature, features, color, language, art, music, and many of their characteristics, we would be convinced that their ancestors were of Asiatic origin. There is evidence that they acquired control of this continent by conquest, rather than by peaceful means. Their displacement of the prehistoric races undoubtedly required centuries of time."

This view of America's aborigines—entertained by many—suggests two pertinent questions, namely; what evidence have we to sustain the assumption that the Indians acquired control of this continent by conquest? And, what prehistoric races did they displace?

This second inquiry should be first answered, as the existence of prehistoric races here before the Indians came, must be proven to establish the fact of conquest.

The first peopling of America is manifestly an abtruse problem; as chaotic as the history of the human race as based upon the Mosaic record and chronology of Bishop Usher. But though the investigations of prehistoric archaeologists have rendered untenable the Usherian interpretation of events, and have apparently firmly fixed

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<sup>1</sup> The Cosmopolitan Magazine, April, 1911.

the conviction of man's high antiquity in Europe, they have failed to bring to light indubitable proofs of his pre-glacial presence in America.

Admitting the common belief that the Indians were exotic in the western hemisphere, their possession of it, if by conquest, was, inferentially, by overcoming an earlier indigenous race now extinct. No vestige of such an extinct race has yet been discovered. There are, however, well-informed anthropologists who cling in belief to the autochthonous origin of the American Indian—that he was “to the manor born,” created here. And some even attribute to him—believing America to be the oldest of the continents—ancestry of the Asiatic races. And why not? There is certainly no physical or physiological obstacle fatal to its possibility.

But there is no postulate of science so generally accepted as that of the unity of the human family. If, then, scions of a primal genus, the first Indians here were immigrants from foreign lands, their conquests were of wild animals and wild forces of nature. They found here no prior occupants to contend with them for supremacy. There are various opinions regarding the date of their coming, the soundest of which can not be more than vague conjecture. Computing time by the scale of months and years, their arrival was undoubtedly very far in the distant past; but reckoning time by geologic epochs, they are but of yesterday.

Prof. Baldwin, one of the most zealous supporters of the Indian's extreme antiquity, strangely advanced this argument in proof of it: “None of these works (mounds and inclosures) occur on the lowest-formed of the river terraces, which mark the subsidence of the western streams; and as there is no good reason why their builders have avoided erecting them on that terrace, while they raised them promiscuously on all the others, it

follows, not unreasonably, that this terrace has been formed since the works were erected.”<sup>2</sup>

This author was a fair sample of the library investigator, and knew nothing of the big Beardstown mound, the Baehr mounds in Brown county, the great Etowah mound in Georgia, the group of stupendous mounds on the American Bottom, and the hundreds of others known to be unquestionably artificial in structure, similarly built, of drift clay brought from the distant bluffs, on low alluvial river bottoms—the most recent of terrace deposits—and many of them in close proximity to the streams.

More practical investigators observing the startling revelations of primal man's existence disclosed by the glacial gravels of France, concluded that the history and course of primitive man was, logically, the same on both hemispheres, and searched industriously for evidence of his presence in the Tertiary, or Pleistocene, formations of this country. Occasional discoveries seemed to realize their expectations, as the rude quartz flakes from old moraines at Little Falls, Minnesota; the hearth with its debris of ashes, bone-fragments and charcoal, 22 feet down in the post-glacial terrace on the south shore of Lake Ontario; Dr. Claypole's grooved stone ax brought up from twenty-odd feet beneath the surface at New London, Ohio; the fragment of a human femur, showing glacial striæ and human manipulation, found 21 feet down in true glacial gravels; the artifacts of argillaceous chert recovered from the Trenton, N. J. gravels; the famous Calaveras skull imbedded in auriferous gravels overlaid with several stratas of volcanic tufa and lava, 130 feet below the surface of Table Mountain in California; the Lansing skull from 20 feet of undisturbed silt forming an ancient terrace of the Missouri river

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<sup>2</sup> *Ancient America*. By J. D. Baldwin, New York, 1872, p. 47.

near Lansing, Kansas; and other instances indicating that man was here at a very early period.

The archaeologist, however, was not permitted to monopolize those precious antiquities to bolster up his preconceived theories. The astute geologist intrusively applied the tests of his science, and proved conclusively that the water-worn matrix imbedding those relics was in no instance near so old as the relic-hunters claimed them to be. And the craniologist demonstrated the fact that the human skulls were of the same round (*brachycephalic*) type and development as those of modern Indians; and, further, that the associated stone implements, etc., were of the neolithic era, and decidedly recent.

The latest of the earth's great catastrophes, the Glacial Period, occurred long ago. Yet, science presumes to determine its date, approximately, by our present chronological scale. Geikie says: "Upwards of 200,000 years ago the earth, as we know from the calculations of astronomers, was so placed in regard to the sun that a series of physical changes was induced, which eventually resulted in conferring upon our hemisphere a most intensely severe climate. All northern Europe and northern America disappeared beneath a thick crust of ice and snow, and the glaciers of such regions as Switzerland assumed gigantic proportions."<sup>3</sup> And the glacial epoch, according to Croll, extended here over a period of 80,000 years.<sup>4</sup>

The American ice sheet—perhaps a mile or more in thickness over the area of our great northern lakes—covered Illinois, excepting a small northwestern corner, as far down as Jonesboro and Shawneetown, receding for awhile, then again advancing, and finally very slowly disappeared by melting away. The valley of the St.

<sup>3</sup> The Great Ice Age. James Geikie, F. R. S. E., F. G. S., New York. D. Appleton & Co., 1874, p. 469.

<sup>4</sup> Climate And Time. By James Croll, Geologist of Scotland. New York, 1874. D. Appleton & Co., p. 328.

Lawrence, as far up as Lake Erie, remained filled with ice long after the water-sheds farther west were freed from their gradually retreating glaciation. Consequently, the waters of Lake Michigan rose to the height of the old Chicago beach lines, and then escaped, in great volume, through the valley of the Illinois river. In course of time the St. Lawrence ice barrier was removed, thereby restoring the eastern outlet of the Lakes, lowering Lake Michigan to its present level, and relieving the Illinois river valley of its immense enforced drainage.

For many centuries during and after the Ice Age, Illinois was a barren desolation in which terrestrial life was impossible. The great pachyderms, the mastodons and mammoths, that for ages had held undisputed sway over forest and plain, together with the entire primal fauna and flora, were swept away and buried in the mass of detritus left by the departed ice, commensurate in extent with the ice-covered area. That crushed, ground, water-worn material—classified by geologists as “mantle rock,” “boulder clay, or till,” and “glacial drift, or loess”—deposited from 1 to 450 feet in thickness, wrought vast changes in the physiography of our State by filling river beds and valleys, diverting streams in other courses, and giving the average surface its present topographical flatness.<sup>5</sup> Within ten or twelve hundred centuries following the last recession of the ice fields, the process of transforming Illinois from a lifeless solitude to a theatre of teeming animation, by the agencies of rain and frost, wind and sunshine, was slowly accomplished. Life, both animal and vegetable, first appeared in the rivers and lakes. Vegetation cautiously creeping landward, spread, flourished, and, by succession of growth and decay for ages coated the drift sands and clays with productive soil.

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<sup>5</sup> See the very interesting and instructive monograph by Prof. Harlan H. Barrows; entitled, “Geography of the Middle Illinois Valley,” published as Bulletin 15 of the Illinois State Geological Survey.

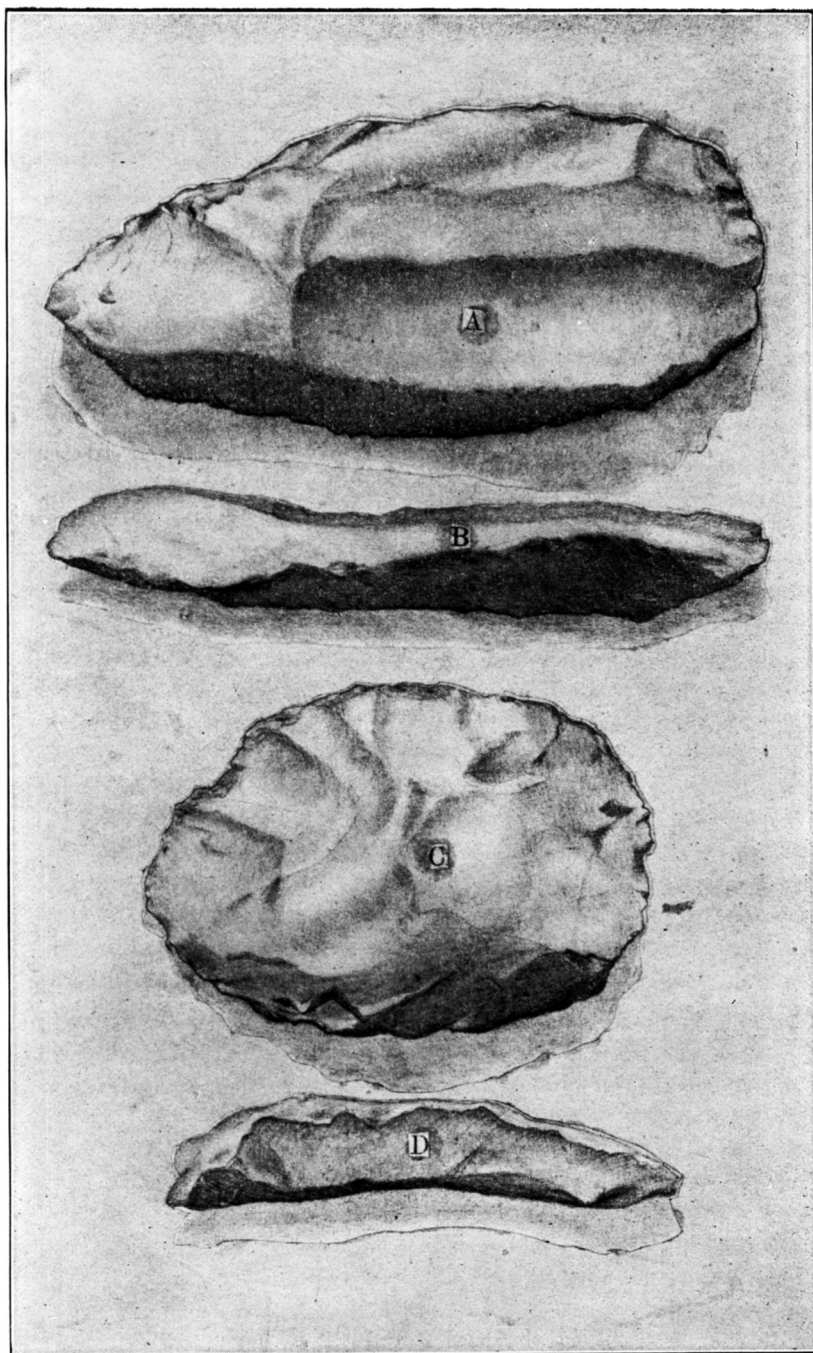


PLATE I.

- A. C. Side View of Flint Implements.  
B. D. Edge View of Same.

The Indian was the first human being to implant his footsteps upon that soil in Illinois. The fact that the primitive aborigines left no written records, and that we are totally ignorant of their origin, language and traditions, suggests the wisdom of formulating conclusions concerning them with the utmost care. We know they were Indians by the physical and biological evidence of their anatomical remains. And, although the analist's scale of years and centuries can not reliably be applied to the measure of cosmic time, it can be asserted with some degree of confidence that the first Indians arrived here less than 2,000 years ago. Meeting no one to contest their possession of the country, they occupied it peacefully. Atmospheric and climatic conditions were the same then as now, and the ecology of plant and animal life but little different. The forces of rains, winds, here and aggradations there, as still in action, had frost and water currents—causing erosions and abrasions, shaped the surface of Illinois and had given expression and charm to its varied landscapes.

No positive evidence of the existence of a Paleolithic age in Illinois has yet been discovered. In all parts of the State ample opportunities have been afforded scientists for exhaustive examination of its mantle rock, till, loess and moraine deposits in their bisections by post-glacial streams, by their exposure in numerous railroad cuts, in deep borings, well-digging and other excavations, without, thus far, bringing to light any object that could certainly be identified as a pre-glacial or inter-glacial paleolith of artificial shaping; or other proof of an extinct human race prior to the Indians.

The rudely chipped flints represented in Plate 1, found, with others, in the glacial gravels of the old lake beaches at Chicago some years ago, and widely proclaimed to be implements of a pre-Indian, pre-glacial, people, were carefully examined, with their surroundings, by competent archaeologists who, observing they were there



associated with camp refuse of recent Indians, and discovering that similar objects of the same material and same style of workmanship were common surface finds in many localities, pronounced them of no greater age than the mounds, and geologically quite modern. Reviewing the many claims for man's high antiquity in America, Professor Hrdlicka says: "The evidence as a whole only strengthens the conclusion that the existence on this continent of a man of distinctly primitive type and of exceptional geological antiquity has not as yet been proved."<sup>6</sup>

Well-marked characteristics of all physical remains of the pre-Columbian people of America, from the Arctic zone to Terra del Fuego, conclusively testify to the fact that they were one distinct homogeneous race; divided, however, into many cultural groups denoting various stages of development. They were all red Indians, and very probably their initial tribes occupied the subtropical regions of this continent during, and long before, the Ice Period.

Early Indian migrations followed—though not invariably—the principal water courses. Traced by similarity of skeleton structure, and analogous artifacts, warrants the assertions that the first human beings in Illinois were Indians who followed the Mississippi up from the south, and slowly moving northward, finally located in the territory between that great stream and the Illinois river. They were mound builders, wholly dependent for subsistence upon the chase and native products; and were adepts in the neolithic culture of the Stone Age, but had not mastered the ceramic art. Their advent here may have been a dozen centuries ago; but since their arrival no striking physiographical mutations in the State's surface have occurred. Minor topographical changes are occasionally observed which seemingly indicate a vast

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<sup>6</sup> Bulletin No. 34 of the U. S. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D. C., 1909.

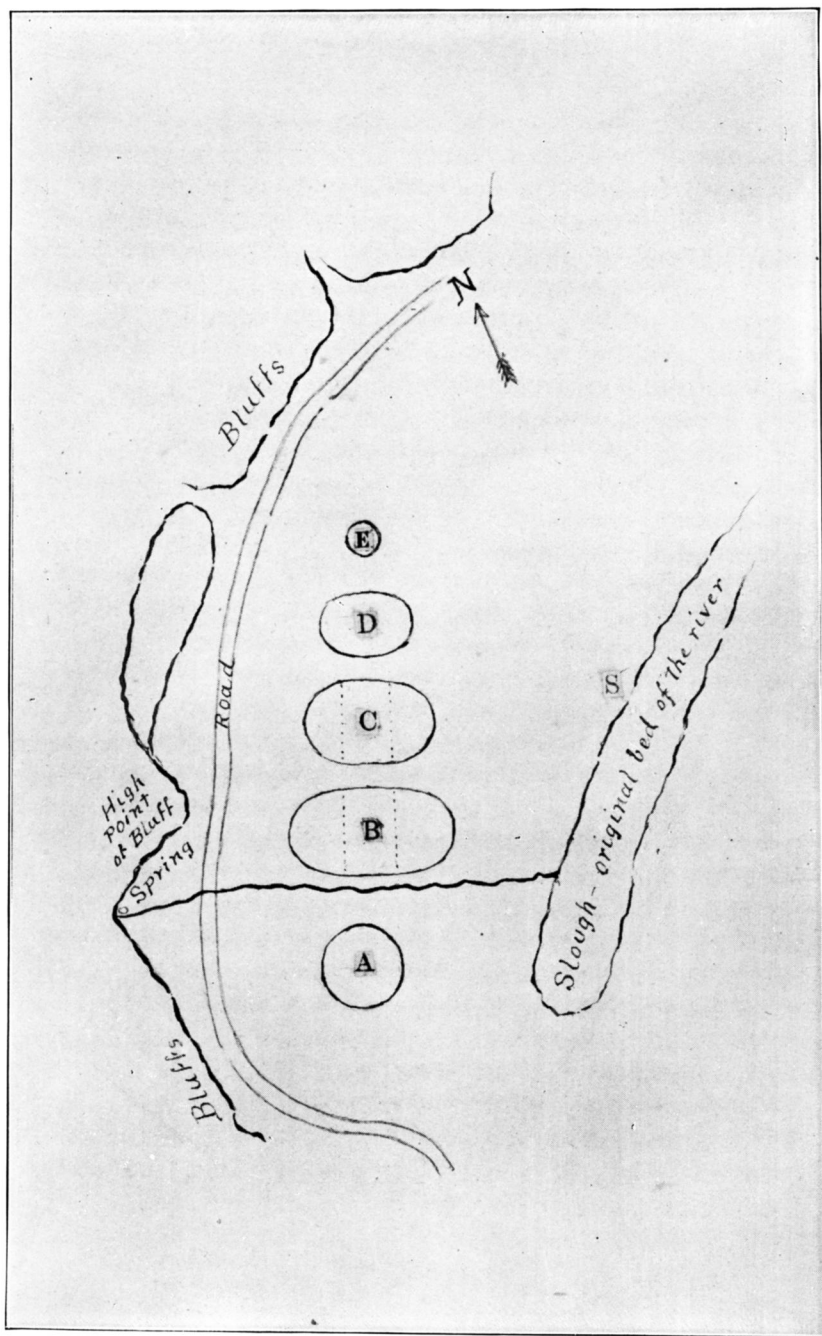


PLATE II.

The Baehr Mounds, near LaGrange, Brown County, Ill.

lapse of time since the erection of adjacent artificial mounds. The noted Baehr mounds in Brown county, Plate 2, regarded, from reliable extrinsic and intrinsic evidence, to be among the most ancient in the State, are an example of this. When first seen they were in the midst of a dense primeval forest, and covered with large trees of undoubted great age. The mounds, A, B, C, D, and E, situated near the bluffs, on the alluvial bottom, when built there were upon the bank of the Illinois river, the former channel of which is now a long shallow slough, S, and the river at present is almost a mile farther east. However, this hydrographic change of course in the flat, silty bottom of the Illinois could easily be effected within the limit of a century.<sup>7</sup>

In dealing with the history of ancient society here, the archaeologist, while bearing in mind the geologist's periods of rock formations and earth changes, is guided by a scale of time measurement of his own, with units of physical development and degrees of culture.

The first Indians invading Illinois had somewhere emerged from primitive savagery and reached the lower or middle plane of barbarism. Of roving habits, they were elevated above the savage state only in their custom of mound building and skill in some of the mechanical arts. They disposed of their dead, often by cremation, with lavish votive offerings, in huge sepulchral tumuli, but erected no temple mounds, their mythology inciting neither homage or worship, but only dread of mythical vengeful spirits. Their anthropometric standard was low. Rarely above medium height, their skeletons are distinguished by certain amorphous peculiarities. The plantar arch is well-nigh absent, the tibia flat and sharp-edged (platycnemic), the coccyx elongated, and the humerus perforated at its distal extremity—presenting in these respects resemblance to the corresponding bones of the ape. A further resemblance to lower animals of

<sup>7</sup> The American Archaeologist. Columbus, Ohio, 1898. Vol. II, p. 16.

anthropoid type is observed in the conformation of their crania, (A, B, Plate III), the protruding supraorbital ridges, the narrow, retreating forehead, low facial angle, and face strongly prognathus.

In 1866 Hon. Murray McConnel, of Jacksonville, sent the Smithsonian Institute the skull of one of those Indians (A, Plate IV), with the following explanatory letter: "I have sent you by express a small box containing a human skull of an unusual shape and formation. It is evidently not deformed, but a natural skull, and from its shape and the place where it was found, it is believed not to have belonged to any race of men now known to exist, and it is conjectured it may have belonged to a preadamite race, if there was any such race. \* \* \* \* I have never met with such a formed head as this either living or dead. \* \* \* and will now refer particularly to the place where it was found. \* \* \* Along the Illinois (river) bluff the strata of rock covering the coal deposit crop out, and this rock is quarried for building purposes. In one of these quarries a few miles south of the fortieth degree of north latitude this skull was found. Several feet of clay, sand and broken stone were taken off the strata, and, in quarrying, a rift or seam in the rock was found, about three feet wide, filled with the same material that covered the quarry, and in this rift or seam in the rock, firmly imbedded in this clay; sand, and broken rock, this skull was found. Examination showed that it had evidently been thrown, or washed into that opening in the rock with the material that surrounded it."<sup>8</sup>

That Indian skull secured by Gen. McConnel, now in the National Museum, numbered 24,388, was considered a natural freak, or the undeveloped cranium of an idiot, and exceptional. But in course of time skulls of the same

<sup>8</sup> Bulletin 34 of U. S. Bureau of American Ethnology, p. 87.

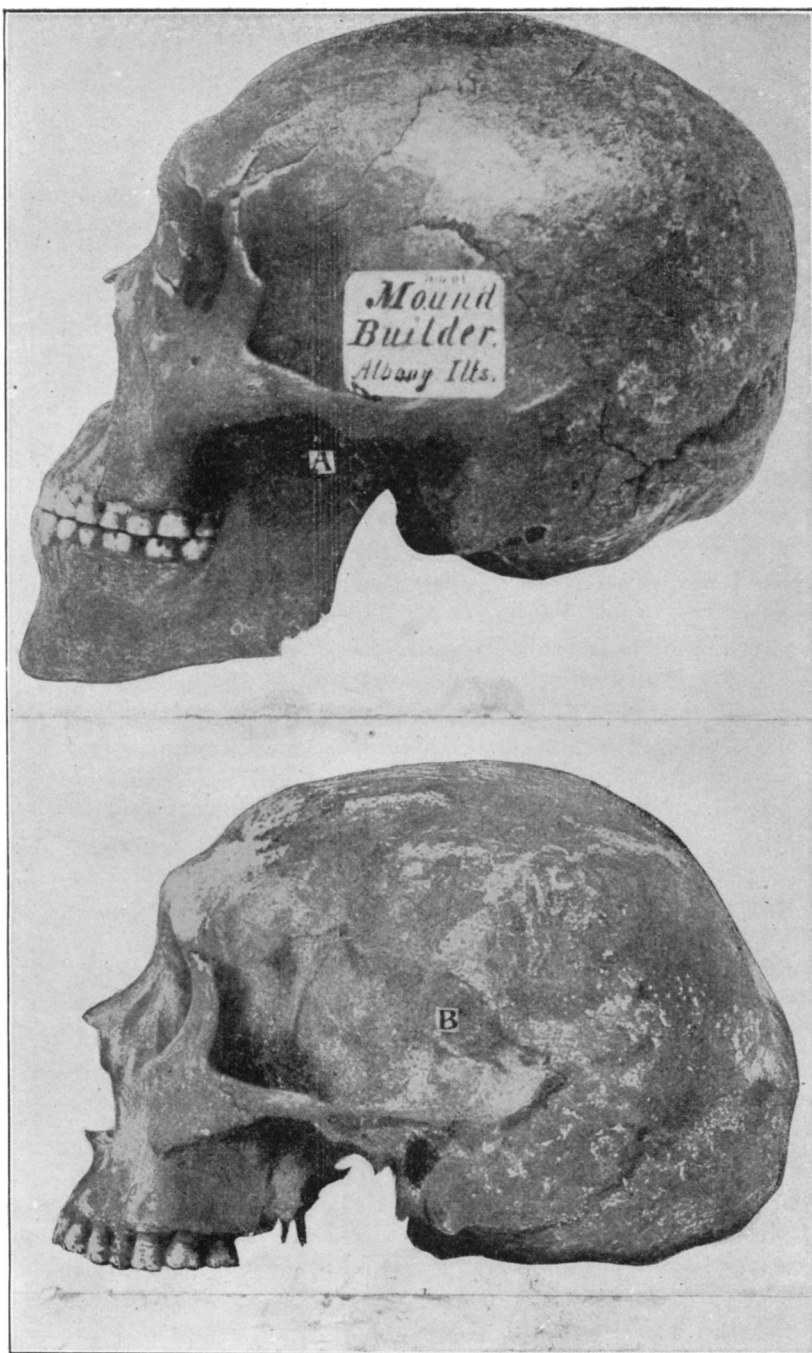
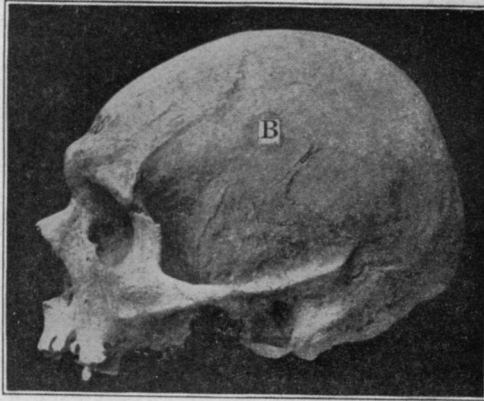
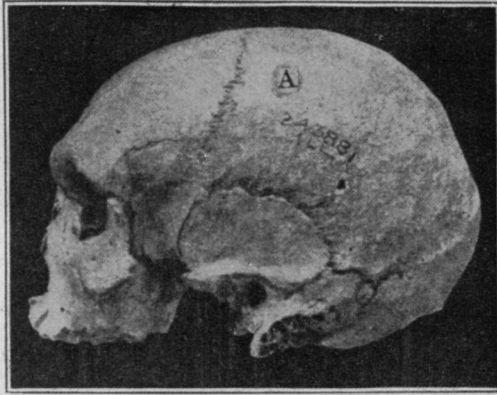


PLATE III.

A. From a Mound near Albany, Whiteside Co., Ill., in the Museum of the Davenport, Iowa, Academy of Science.

B. From a Mound in Schuyler Co., Ill. (Author's collection.)



**PLATE IV.**

A. The McConnell, or Rock Bluff Skull. From Brown County, Illinois.

B. Indian Skull from a Mound near Alton, Ill., in the National Museum.

conformation were unearthed, from the Stimpson and Kennicott mounds near Chicago, the Baehr mounds in Brown county, mounds near Alton, near Albany in Whiteside county, in Cass, Schuyler and Adams counties, and from many other localities in northwestern Illinois. So uniform were their shapes, measurements, cephalic index, etc., that all idea of freakish malformation was dispelled, and they were recognized as constituting a generic racial type.

Concurrence of art motive, and cultural status, observed in certain artifacts of these primitive Illinois Indians and of those of the earliest mound builders of Ohio,—the absence of temple mounds, similarity of mortuary customs, and identity of skeletal deficiencies, in both, tend to strengthen the supposition that they were contemporaneous and intercommunicant, and either cognate peoples, or derivatives of a common ancestral stock.

Those pioneer Indians remained upon their preempted portion of Illinois a long time. How long? Then what caused their final departure, disappearance, or extinction? are questions unanswerable, riddles of the anthropologist and despair of the historian.

They were perhaps gone when another tide of immigration from the south—Indians also, but of an advanced grade—came to Illinois by the same route, and chose the American Bottom for their dominion; and there in time erected the well known elaborate system of mounds. These new-comers were semi-sedentary, and agriculturists to a considerable extent, cultivating corn, cotton, tobacco, and beans, and had dogs, remote descendents of the domesticated wolf. Skilled and esthetic stone workers, they carved it in form of images, and moulded images of clay. They spun the cotton and wove it deftly; and their fictile ware was the acme of aboriginal pottery art. They were sun worshipers, and probably burned their dead, as no cemeteries of theirs have yet been discovered. The few of their remains recovered prove them

to have exceeded the first Indians in stature, and in cranial and skeletal development.

About the time the temple mound builders settled on Cahokia creek, or some time before, another swarm of Indians, from the south—or possibly they were a colony from the early occupants of Ohio—ascended the Wabash and its tributaries, and left their impress there in the form of ordinary sepulchral and memorial mounds, and the usual implements and imperishable residuum of the Stone Age.

Time passed, and the great mounds on the American Bottom were old, grass-grown, and weather seamed,—perhaps abandoned—, when a new element of population appeared there known as the Stone Grave Indians. Their route of migration from the parent hive in the Cumberland Valley of Tennessee, is readily traced by their mode of burial in stone-lined graves. The first objective point they sought in the new country north of the Ohio was the Saline Springs in Gallatin county. From there they wandered west to the Mississippi; thence, by slow stages, continued along its bluffs to the Falling Spring east of Cahokia. Abiding there awhile they left Illinois, crossing the great river, and disappeared in the wilds of Missouri. The only mounds they built were aggregations of stone cists, containing their dead, piled together in tiers on the ground and covered over with earth. They excelled all their kindred in the Mississippi Valley in the arts of domestic life, and particularly in sculpture, flint chipping, and pottery making.

“Progress, on the whole,” says Ex-President Roosevelt, “has been rhythmic, long periods of retrogression succeeding the periods when the world has gone forward.”<sup>9</sup> This is especially true so far as relates to the history of primitive American Indians. Beyond doubt the tendency of the race was, in the main, to a higher

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<sup>9</sup> The Outlook. New York. May 14th, 1911.



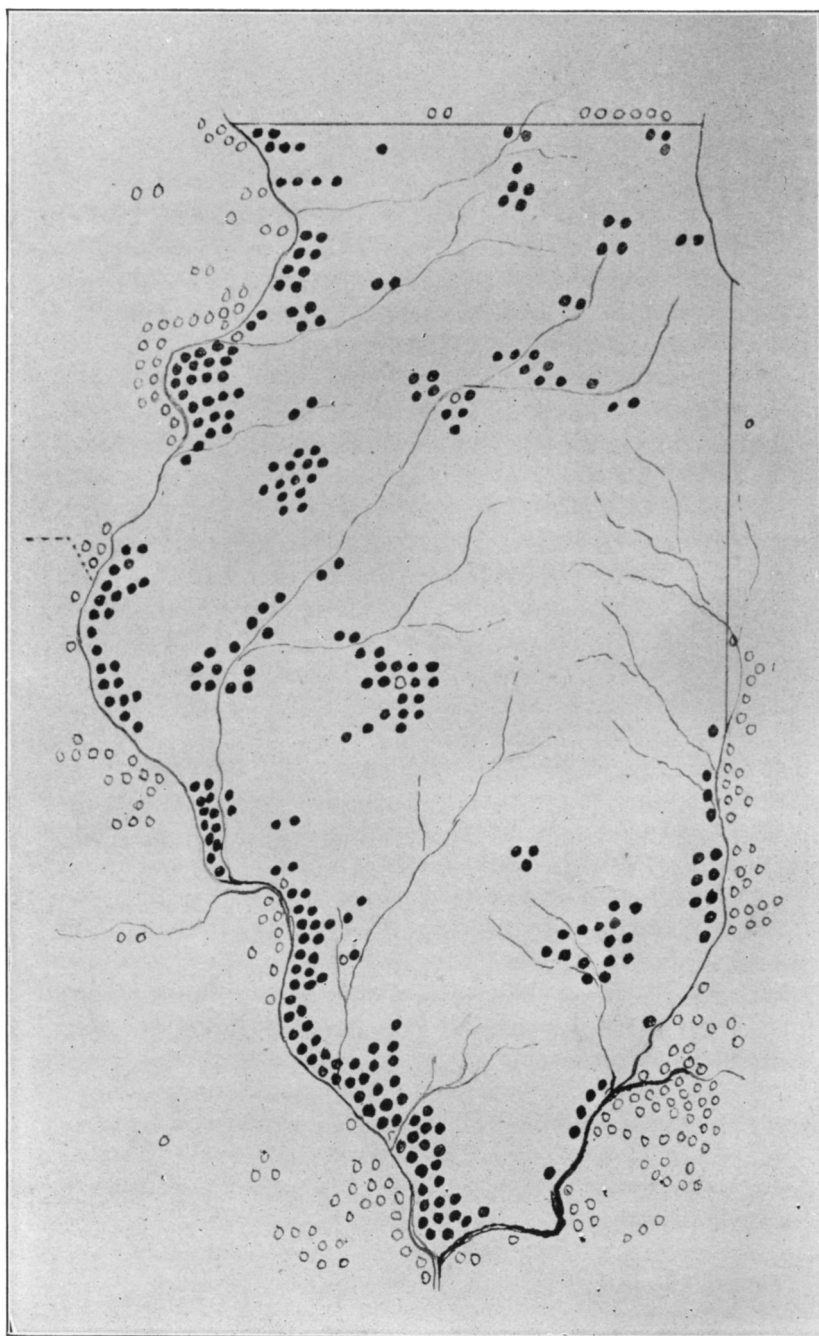


PLATE V.

Indian Mounds of Illinois.

(From the 12th Annual Report of the U. S. Bureau of  
Ethnology.)

cultural plane; but its progress from pristine savagery on through the grades of barbarism to incipient civilization, was often interrupted by long periods of stagnation, if not positive retrogression. Their ethnic condition when first seen by Europeans, if properly interpreted, confirms this fact. They were then, throughout both continents, relapsed from a higher estate and in a state of decadence. The majestic pyramids and cities of Mexico had long been deserted. A remnant of the once powerful and cultured Mayas still lingered about the wonderful stone edifices of Uxmal and Kabah, but Palenque was tenanted only by bats and snakes, and the great palaces of Copan, with their carved altars and weird megalithic monuments, were a mass of ruins buried in dense tangled tropical vegetation.

The Indians of our Gulf states, when seen by DeSoto in 1539, still utilized the platform mounds of their ancestors, but erected no new ones. In Illinois the large mounds had long since been abandoned, and the wild roving savages that prowled about them were more ignorant of their history than we now are.

Plate V is designed to represent the distribution of Indian mounds in Illinois. It is obviously but an approximation, drawn on too small a scale for exactness of location, or class designation. With the exodus of the real mound builders—the southern Indians who first peopled Illinois—mound building ceased, and they were henceforward a lost and unknown race. With their departure the erection of large memorial and temple mounds—earthen monuments consecrated to the highest concepts of Indian mythology—abruptly ended. But, with few exceptions, all pre-Columbian Indians were mound builders; and in the interior they continued mound building for some time after the border tribes had come in contact with the whites. The mounds of the later Indians, however, were merely surface burials. Without the knowledge, appliances, or industry, for digging

graves, they placed their dead on the ground enveloped in dressed skins, then covered them with bark—stones sometimes—and threw sufficient earth over them to protect the remains from the ravages of wolves and other wild animals. They are the mounds that crown the peaks and ridges of almost all our river bluffs.

Nothing is definitely known of the conditions or events that caused the older (real) mound builders to disappear from Illinois. Two theories have been advanced for solution of the problem, both plausible but neither capable of satisfactory demonstration. The one is the demoralization of their culture and progress wrought by the advent of the buffalo; the other (and more probable) is the invasion of their territory by the savage Algonkins. The buffalo was a late arrival, not reaching Illinois a great while before Columbus first sighted Cat Island. As nearly as can be "guessed," the first Bisons made their way to the east side of the Mississippi by following down the Saskatchewan, skirting lakes Winnipeg, Superior and Michigan, and from Illinois ranged eastward to Niagara Falls, thence turning south crossed the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania, and spread over the western portion of Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and reached the Atlantic coast in Georgia and northwestern Florida. Their principal habitat no doubt was the open prairie regions north of the Ohio, and only severity of winter weather forced them temporarily into the Gulf States. They were never very numerous on this side of the Mississippi, not thriving well on the coarse indigenous grass of our prairies. In De Soto's march from Georgia to the Mississippi in 1539-41, he did not see, or hear anything of, the buffalo, which, it must be inferred, had not yet reached that latitude.

Theorists claim that the incoming herds of buffalos affording the sedentary mound builders a new element of food, so bountiful and easily secured, that they abandoned their mounds and agriculture, and degenerated to

wild savage hunters. The significant fact, however, that no bones or horns of the buffalo have been found in Indian mounds, and are very seldom, if ever, seen in the debris of their ancient camp and village sites, is reasonable presumptive evidence that the old mound builders were long since gone when the buffalo arrived here.

When the French took possession of the St. Lawrence, in 1603, they found in that region three powerful Indian nations, the Algonkins, Hurons and Iroquois, bitterly hostile to each other. The Algonquian family, the most numerous, prolific, and migratory of the three, even then extended from Labrador to the Rocky Mountains in numberless tribes and subdivisions. The Chippewas, Sioux, Blackfeet, and other offshoots of that family, roamed over the western plains following the great herds of buffalos there. They overran Illinois before the buffalo did, but after the old mound builders had left. When asked who built the mounds they answered, "Nobody knows; they were always here."

At the dawn of our Illinois history the Algonkins were here as Miamas, Potawatomis, the Illinois confederacy, Sacs and Foxes, Kickapoos, Winnebagos and Shawnees. One of their small sub-tribes very early located in southern Wisconsin and partly in Illinois and Iowa, and there developed the unique custom of effigy, or totem mound building. They were all characterically restless, unstable nomads, moving from place to place, and usually at war with each other, or with their ancient hereditary enemy, the Iroquois. In this State they were all of the hunter class, but a few of the tribes, as the Illinois, were to a limited extent also tillers of the soil, raising corn and tobacco. In the main they disposed of their dead in small mounds, but some deposited them in trees or on scaffolds, and there left them to be disintegrated and dispersed by the elements.

NOTE—It is frankly admitted that the foregoing cursory sketch of the first stocking of Illinois with the genus homo is largely hypothetical. Necessarily so, because of the paucity of reliable data. Much of it is speculation, with some facts upon which to base sound deductive reasoning. The remains of our aboriginal predecessors and their arts—wholly ignored by the State and neglected by its educators—have been so long debauched, plundered, and wasted, by ignorant relic hunters and venal curio dealers that but a remnant of them is now available for intelligent investigation and study. Still, it can be confidently asserted that the limited researches in Illinois by capable scholars versed in the science of prehistoric anthropology, well sustain the general deductions of this paper.